

Carnegie Mellon

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Alumna's startup creates link among homeowners

From time to time, Ellen Hasenkamp's coworkers at Oracle Corp. in Atlanta, GA would discuss their dreams of creating one kind of dot-com or another. None of the ideas seemed promising. In the end, a favor Hasenkamp (E'96) did for a friend inspired the colleagues' startup, Resident Interactive, Inc.

After Hasenkamp helped Gretchen Roberts put her neighborhood association's newsletter online, "the light bulb went off with everybody that if there were a need for a communication tool in their neighborhood, there's definitely going to be a strong need for it throughout the country," Hasenkamp says. Gretchen's husband, Bill Roberts, Hasenkamp and a third principal, Dennis Papalois, incorporated Resident Interactive in November 1999. Three months later, they quit their jobs at Oracle to devote themselves to it full-time.



Ellen Hasenkamp followed a serendipitous route to e-business.

Neighborhood Association members can use Resident Interactive to design an online newsletter, find babysitters, keep current on neighborhood issues and conduct online surveys and votes. The high degree of interactivity has attracted hundreds of community organizations across the country, and growth has been rapid.

"Right now we're not doing any kind of advertising or soliciting to existing neighborhoods because word of mouth is keep us so busy," Hasenkamp says. In some new housing developments, access to Resident Interactive is part of the amenities package offered to home buyers.

While being involved in a startup is scary, Hasenkamp says she was at a good stage of life to take such a risk. Single, she was comfortable financially because of her job as a sales consultant at Oracle. Easily bored by repetition, she welcomed the challenge of being Resident Interactive's vice president of application development.

"The good thing about building a company is you never get bored because once you figure one thing out and you've got that mastered, there are a hundred other things you can do to improve your business," she says. "And they're all different." --Ruth Hammond